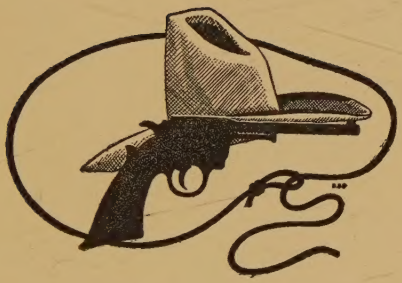
WITHDRAWN

SONGS OF THE LOST FRONTIER

SONGS OF THE LOST FRONTIER

By
Henry Herbert Knibbs



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TO

TURBESÉ LUMMIS

Note

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SONGS OF THE LOST FRONTIER

Songs of the Lost Frontier

* * *

STALLIONS OF THE STORM

Never to ride again,
Never to know
The rush of wind and rain,
The tang of the mountain snow?

Never again to feel
A good horse between my knees?
To watch the ponies wheel
To the swing of quirt and steel —
The hot dust driving down the breeze?

Tom and Tonto and Charley Lee down in the street
And done.
The Kid? yes, he was white.
Only him left on his feet —
And an empty gun.
My horse shot down,
Somehow The Kid drags me out of the fight.
So long, Vegas town!

Well, if a posse follow....
Here at the shack

In Horse Thief Hollow,
  All they'll find is a dog with a broken back.
The Kid could laugh at that.
Laugh and pull down his hat —
  'I'll drift now, Pecos! you're damn near done;
And I'm short of shells.'
  But he left a load in my gun.

Never to ride again,
  High trail or low?
  The wheel is dead;
The ball stops on the black
  And I played red.

Never to ride again,
  High trail or low?
But there's a load in the gun
  Whenever I want to go.

Mountain shadow and evening star...
  A breeze ran up from the desert dim:
A breeze? or an echo, faint and far?
  A whisper of 'Water!' and 'Pecos Jim!'
Dreams that torture and dreams that lie!
The Kid on foot — and his canteen dry?

Mountain shadow and evening star...
  A breeze ran up from the desert dim,

Stallions of the Storm

Flicker of red and a fading scar
  Of lightning over the cañon rim.
In Horse Thief Hollow the hurrying beat
Of the quick, sharp rain like galloping feet.

East and West, uprearing breast to breast,
  Treading the dark pines under,
Cloud-stallions surged and battled — hoof and crest
  White flame and thunder.

Never to ride? What horses these?
What silver herd of the Pleiades?
Stardust filly and Steeldust sire,
Ranging meadows of foam and fire;
Tempest-driven and phantom-led!
Stallion, devil, or thunderhead,
Shod with fury and girt with might;
Never to ride? But I'll ride to-night!

Gather your mares, your silver mares,
  Whistle your wild mares from the sky.
Down where the desert lightning flares
  The sand is white, the pool is dry.

...

The Kid will laugh. 'Since when you wrangled these?
  What borrowed brand has got you on the run,
Pecos? A thousand head? You're hard to please.
  A thousand head? I'll match you coins for one.'

My silver mares? A cloudburst when they mill.
Rain on the lowlands, rain along the hill.
Water? The deep arroyo's foaming red.
Kid, if you're thirsty, bow your neck and drink.
Now you can laugh — I roped a thunderhead!

'You rode a cloudburst? Roped a thunderhead?
Pecos, you're loco — quit your crazy talk.
Pass your canteen... mine's empty... horse dropped dead.
I been in Hell afoot — a damn long walk!
Pass your canteen!' But in the lightning flare
Only the hoofprint of a giant mare;

Only the rain that leaped to fill the pool.
On hand and knees The Kid drank, eyes astare;
'I'm dreaming wild... Those silver mares? the stud?
This, water? Pecos always was a fool;
Ask for a drink — he'd wrangle up a flood!'

...

In Horse Thief Hollow the storm, the splendor gone,
The stallion of the tempest, ranging far,
Trailed with his gleaming consorts down the dawn,
Grazing the pastures of the morning star;
Sharp dawn that roused the outlaw Pecos Jim,
Brushed a wild vision from his fevered eyes,
Staring beyond the purple cañon rim,
The rigid pines, the unremembering skies;

Stallions of the Storm

Never to ride again,
High trail or low?
But there's a load in the gun
Whenever I want to go.

Whenever I want to go?
I'll ride for myself a spell.
How The Kid would laugh! I'll cross the ridge
And run me a brand in Hell.

BARROWLEA

He'd never pulled an oar,
Put hand to sheet or wheel,
He'd never been a league from shore,
Or felt a schooner heel,
Yet every ship he knew
That touched at Barrowlea,
Aye! every ship and every crew
That ever sailed the sea!

Shoemaking was his trade,
But mending shoes his work,
And many a good, stout sole he made,
Went squeaking into kirk,
The where with shaven lip,
And Sabbath on his face,
He'd con the full-rigged model ship,
From keel to mizzen brace.

Of barkentine or brig,
Afloat or in the stays,
He knew the name, the run, the rig;
Aye! those were sailing days!
Long hours he'd sit a-chin,
With bearded sailormen,
Who spent their time and like their tin,
In Hurley's boozing-ken.

Barrowlea

He was my dad, you see,
And well I call to mind,
The way he had of making free
In talk with humankind;
With Tom or Bill or Joe,
He'd sit and blow the foam,
And yarn till mither bade me go
And fetch my father home.

Sail set for home he'd walk
Like any rolling tar;
And Losh! but how he loved to talk
Of foreign lands and far,
Till, supper standing cold,
He'd read my mither's frown,
And stow his chatter in the hold,
And clamp the hatches down.

Aye! many a port he hailed,
Awake with dreaming eyes,
Till, old and worn with years he sailed
Outbound for Paradise.
I never knew till then,
How still a house could be
With none to talk of sailormen,
And yarn about the sea.

NAMELESS RIVER

We had dreamed a nameless river,
  Dreamed an undiscovered shore,
And we left our homes forever,
  Ai! to wander evermore!
Mad with longing for a haven,
  Never man had seen before.

Dread the dark'ning forest arches,
  Fierce the toil and scant the bread,
Breasting dank and sunless marches,
  With a song to cheat the dread,
Till we found a wide green meadow
  Where the nameless river spread.

Stripped the birch and cedar bending,
  Shaped the rib and wrought the craft,
Labored stubborn hours unending,
  Fashioned maple-blade and haft,
Launched upon the nameless river,
  Mad with longing, and we laughed.

So we drifted down the river,
  Peered at phantoms overside...
Down the silvery winding river,
  To a white and quick'ning tide;

Nameless River

Fought the turmoil and the terror,
  Rode the wave as warriors ride.

Kindled fire on many beaches,
  Snared the otter, slew the deer,
While the unknown river reaches
  Called us, till we needs must hear...
In the twilight, in the dawning,
  Called us on from year to year.

Naked skies and skies of thunder
  Sang or threatened — naught were they.
Nights resplendent, shores of wonder
  Bade us from our toil and stay;
But our dream was of a haven
  Fairer still, and far away.

So we drifted down the river,
  Mad with longing, fey were we...
Down the silvery winding river,
  Doomed to journey endlessly,
Ever dreaming of a haven
  Never man was born to see.

DIRGE OF AN INDIAN MOTHER

They have carried him down to the hollow land,
To the hollow land below;
They have laid him down in the hollow land,
With quiver and lance and bow;
Their feet are red with bitter dust,
Their eyes are dim with woe.

They have kindled flame in the hollow land,
The withering branches groan;
They have slain his horse in the hollow land,
They have shattered the bowl of stone;
His spirit rides on the drifting smoke,
In the hollow land and lone

I shall go down to the hollow land,
Where my warrior son has gone;
I shall go down to the hollow land
When the hill wind brings the dawn,
When the panther drinks at the morning pool,
And the lean doe calls the fawn.

THE BARB OF SPAIN

A SWARTHY host on alien enterprise,
Vanguard of empire, cavaliers of Spain,
They traversed, a bleak hunger in their eyes,
The burning plain.

Against the invasion of their iron tread
The unresisting desert gave no sound:
Yet with each shadow marched a formless dread.
The trailing lance knew rust; no other red
Marked the low mound.

The Seven Cities' vaulted treasure-hold,
Alluring dreams of conquest, legend-wrought,
Jeweled Quivira, Acoma the Old,
Each ruthless dawn destroyed — the spires of gold
Fading to naught.

Beleaguered by the silence, by the sun,
Thwarted by ravening winds, by course unplanned,
The cavalcade of doom fell one by one,
To some dark foe, some ghostly myrmidon,
Some unseen hand.

The lone survivor of that soundless march,
A night-black stallion hunger-bit and lean,
Fronting the dawn, his crest a regal arch;

A Spanish Barb — of blood no flame could parch,
No fate demean.

Importunate and velvet nostril wide
He drank his freedom. Nevermore to feel
The brutal curb restrain his native stride,
Nor evermore outrage his quivering side
The roweled heel!

An ardent lineage burning in his eye,
Beneath his hoof the banner of a king;
With rounding gaze he searched the barren sky,
Fled from the mute, the last lone tragedy,
Shrill trumpeting.

What cañon wall flung back his questing neigh?
What nameless river cooled his sweating flank?
What treachery of night beset his way?
What hungering eyes, what enemies by day,
Watched while he drank?

By panther branded, scarred by thorny blade,
Wild as his first wild sires of Barbary,
Tracking a desert legion loud he neighed;
Swift from its ranks a fleet young Spanish jade
Broke free.

Consort and mate... What breed with onward ears
Coursed the wide mesas, sentineled the height?

The Barb of Spain

What sires and banded mares? How many years?
Where ride the Sioux, where flash Comanche spears,
  Beyond the night?

When phantom warriors gather for the quest,
  When phantom lodge-fires kindle on the plain,
The lightning-flare his eye, the storm his crest,
A night-black stallion thunders down the West —
  The Barb of Spain.

MARJORIE PICKTHALL

Across the starlit meadow we saw our lady pass,
A silvery singing shadow upon the shadowed grass.
Her way was to the dim wood that lies along the sea,
Where we could never follow. *Ai!* lonely folk were we.

What island song enthralled her no sweeter than her own?
What forest magic called her across the meadow lone?
Or was it Fance the Dreamer who sang his love again
To tread the faery places beyond the homes of men?

We freed a captive swallow to seek our lady's rest,
That song might ever follow the lost, the loveliest.
Our lady loved the springtime, the forest, and the sea,
But there is no returning. *Ai!* lonely folk are we.

THE SILVER-SHOD

When a new day dawns on the Western world and the tribes of men shall pass,
When rooftrees rot in the unturned soil renewed with its native grass,
When pines grow tall where a city stood and newborn rivers rise,
And never a chime shall tell the hour in the hush of the listening skies:

There shall be wild horses running the fenceless plain,
Free as the vagrant wind that sweeps their unpossessed domain;
Studs with a strain of Arab stock, mares of the Morgan breed,
Winter and drouth shall winnow them — the harvest a perfect steed!

Colt of a blue-grass mother, son of a Northern sire,
Head slim-tapered with carven ear and nostril rimmed with fire,
Pride of the wild in the full dark eyes with the breadth of a hand between,
Slant of the shoulder smooth and long, and the cannon slim and clean.

Crested proud as an emperor — a mane like silk new-spun,
Coat of bay with a darkening sheen of bronze in the flaming sun;
Short from loin to wither, from breast to flank fair long,
With swell of vigor from hock to thigh and the quarters broad and strong.

What a horse! But to name him, from barrel that's deep and round,
To pastern slender and fetlock firm, and hoof square-set to ground;
A ripple of moving muscles that play to the reaching stride...
No mortal may gain perfection, but give me that horse to ride!

For such I would pawn my hope of rest in that far-sung Otherwhere;
For such I would filch the silver dust that floats in the starlit air,
Melt it, mould it, and draw it, till fashioned a slender rod,
Then shaped round the horn of the anvil-moon — that he should go silver-shod.

Dome and bridge and singing spire return to the earth again;
The written word is pollen-dust on the graves of a thousand men;

Yet there he stands on an unknown hill in a land from our
ken afar,
The perfect horse, a dream of Chance, the glory of sun and
star.

CHANG CHUNG CHANG

I saw red wings in a red war sky,
And I saw little men, little men go by.
All day long down a winding street
I heard the click clack click of feet.
I saw a throng on the temple stairs,
And fluttering smoke and fluttering prayers,
And no one wept and no one sang
As a bronze gong bellowed Chang Chung Chang!
The big bronze gong in the war-god's hand
Boomed Chang Chung Chang in a far-away land.

Dead were the grasses, dead the flowers,
As the little men trod the long gray hours,
Filling the furrows of hoof and wheel
With flowerless reeds and thorns of steel.
On a wind-blown flag of wavering gold
A Great Blue Dragon writhed and rolled;
While from Hong Kong city to Sin Kiang
The bronze gong bellowed Chang Chung Chang!
The big bronze gong in the war-god's hand
Boomed Chang Chung Chang in a far-away land.

Little men North and little men South
Marched and marched to the dragon's mouth;
Vanishing winrows on they came,

Chang Chung Chang

Thrust and fell in withering flame
And sank from sight in the purple tide
Poured from the dragon's wounded side.
Ever the doom reverberant rang,
The bronze gong bellowing Chang Chung Chang!
The big bronze gong in the war-god's hand
Boomed Chang Chung Chang in a far-away land.

Little men, little men ask not why
One shall rule and a million die.
To-morrow the flowers, the grass, the grain
Will cover the fields in the springtime rain,
And fluttering smoke and fluttering prayers
Will rise again from the temple stairs.
Forgotten the challenging clash and clang —
Only a memory, Chang Chung Chang.

Little men, little men, ask not why
The big bronze gong in the war-god's hand
Boomed Chang Chung Chang in your far-away land.

ILLILOUETTE

Upthrust against the awakening sky,
The barren peaks are gray and cold;
Like deep dark lakes the shadows lie,
Edged by the morning's trenchant gold;
Across the wide green forest floor,
Drift towering sails, their courses set,
As cloudy caravels explore
The Valley of Illilouette.

From height unseen above the height,
Loosed by the chill imprisoning snow,
The mountain stream, a flash of light,
Leaps to the meadow pool below,
Dances down high, echoing halls,
Flings to the sun a silvery net,
And plunges from the cliff that walls
The Valley of Illilouette.

When noon in breathless languor dwells
On pine and cedar, rock and stream,
And faint tumultuous music swells
Above the vision and the dream,
Blue drowns the hollow of the hills
That round, a glittering carcanet,

And fire of amber, glimmering, fills
The Valley of Illilouette.

And there no trail, no camp is known,
In star and sun the valley sleeps,
The wild unfearful claims its own,
Hidden within the fragrant deeps:
Only the arrow-point, the shard,
The rare, the ancient amulet
Remain. Old incantations guard
The Valley of Illilouette.

Though I have journeyed byways long,
Of hill and plain, by land and sea,
Ever I hear the woodland song
Illilouette sings endlessly;
The song that on a summer day
Wrought magic I may not forget,
Though years ago and far away
The Valley of Illilouette.

OUTLAW

A DAY we followed the wild horse herd,
A day and another day;
A fresh mount and a quick word,
At the relay.

Varney's horse turned a hoolihan,
Varney quit.
A good hand. But a dead man
Is out of it.

Buck and I followed the wild horse herd,
The last day;
A fresh mount and the same word
At the relay:
'The Black Storm leads them yet!'

Gray rock, gray sky and the trail gray,
The cold stars gone.
Crowded, the wild mares surged away,
Breasting the dawn.

Their hoofs on the granite rumbled.
At the cañon ledge
A yearling nickered, stumbled,
Went over the edge.

Outlaw

The herd strung out to follow
Down the old track;
But the stallion shied from the hollow
And broke back.

The rim of the sun spread fire,
Down the far height,
Flamed round the storm-black sire,
A glory of light.

A second — it seemed an age;
Up the sun rolled.
The stallion reared in his rage,
His hoofs raw gold.

Ears flat, crest curved,
A snake's eye,
He charged, reared again, swerved,
Hammered the sky.

Buck flipped a loop, took a dally;
The rope steamed.
I heeled him. Blind mad in a rally.
He battled and screamed.

Fight! Just whisper we fought him
Yes, all the way!
Savage and sullen we brought him,
To the relay.

Three ropes on him we eared him,
In the log corral.
The boys on the top rail cheered him,
As he dealt us hell.

He wasted each man that would ride him.
Buck was first;
And the seventh and last that tried him
He crippled the worst.

...

The night fire warm on our faces,
The wind down,
We talked of people and places,
Of range and town.

Quick hoofs drummed out our talking,
Then, a cool surprise,
As Buck from the shadows stalking,
Answered our eyes:

'Too wicked to keep, too noble to kill,
And so,
I turned him loose. He's over the hill,
I let him go.'

Down the sky shot a star,
As a rocket flares.
Black Storm, ranging far,
Called to his mares.

THE SPANISH MAN

Aye, long and drear has stood,
And dark wi' Gypsy ban,
The empty house in Gower wood,
Where walks the Spanish Man.

A tallish man and dark,
Wi' ribands to his clothes,
And eye wi' burnin' glint and spark,
And great outstandin' nose;

Bright buckles on his shoon,
Lace danglin' at his hands,
He walked like one who steps a tune
As comes from foreign lands.

Full free he spent his cash
In Hurley's boozing ken,
The where, with pistol in his sash,
He diced wi' sailormen;

Or, twiddlin' wi' a cane,
He'd strut and take the air;
No high-born lady half so vain
To make a body stare.

Folk whispered to his back,
'A murderin' buccaneer!'
But sailed on quite another tack,
His shadow fallin' near.

Now on a time there came
To dwell in Barrowlea,
Dark Florizel — a sinful name —
A lass of mystery.

'Twas oft my mither said,
While windin' from the skein,
'Aye! come a time the wench will wed
The glowerin' man of Spain.'

My mither had it true!
For come one murky night,
A travelin' Papist wed the two,
By cross and candlelight.

Their painted cottage stood
A piece from Gower Hill,
Where turns the path to Gower Wood,
An eerie spot and still.

'Twas there we lads would hide,
Before the sun went down,
To watch him wi' his Gypsy bride,
Come swaggerin' up from town.

The Spanish Man

The liquor in his gait,
  He'd give his beard a twirl,
And like an eagle, eye his mate,
  The darklin' Gypsy girl.

Then soft we'd up and run,
  Our noses pointed home,
The ghosts of pirates dead and done
  Red reekin' in the gloam.

That springtime I recall
  'Twas Peddler Joe did come;
A pack of ribands, rings and all —
  A penny-itchin' thumb.

Wee mirrors, needles, thread,
  Bright thimbles, skeins of floss —
And on a bit of velvet red,
  A little silver cross.

With that Joe would na' part
  For anything, said he:
The one who wore it next his heart
  Would never drown at sea.

One evenin' long he stayed,
  Though all our bawbees spent:
'Twas passin' late to look for trade,
  When Gower way he went.

It will na' from my mind,
  How Peddler Joe was found,
Stiff dead in Gower Wood, behind
  A ridge of ferny ground.

Wide strewn his leathern pack;
  Gay gauds and satin bands;
A dirk upstandin' in his back,
  And dead leaves in his hands.

All Barrowlea was there,
  A grim and glowerin' clan,
Nod answerin' nod and meanin' stare —
  All but the Spanish Man.

And stranger still befell
  The Port o' Barrowlea;
We lads found Gypsy Florizel
  Stark drowndit in the sea.

Her eyes wi' horror wide,
  Her dead hands waverin' slow,
And to her throat wi' velvet tied
  The cross of Peddler Joe.

Aye, long and drear has stood,
  And dark wi' Gypsy ban,
The empty house in Gower Wood,
  Where walks the Spanish Man.

* * * *
* * *
* *
*

THE LOST LEDGE

Mesquite and cholla and sand —
  Folks think that I'm queer and I'm slow,
When over this wide-open land
  Me and my burro we go.

Anywhere, everywhere — free!
  Our time it ain't traded or sold,
There's plenty of skyline to see,
  And a chance that we'll find the lost gold.

There's a ledge between here and the range;
  I struck it, and, pardner, it ran —
These outcrops they shift and they change —
  Six bits, and then some, to the pan.

I took all the burro could pack,
  Hit town, liquored up, and went broke;
Then I rustled some grub and went back,
  But the ledge it was gone — that's the joke!

These outcrops, they change and they shift;
  A cloudburst will strip 'em and then
Along comes the wind and a drift
  Of sand, and they're buried again.

The Lost Ledge

To some folks, a year is a year,
  But to me, in this wide-open land,
Time's nothing, so long as I'm here,
  And the desert and me understand.

She's whispered to me when the air
  Was so still you could hear yourself think,
'Keep looking! It's right over there,
  Northeast from the old Salton sink.'

Say, hell ain't so awful, at that,
  When I think of the prospects I've made,
And the heat just right under my hat
  Stood at one-thirty-two in the shade;

No water, except the canteen,
  Which was boiling, and worse than the heat,
My tongue was as stiff as a bean,
  And my burro was dead on his feet.

Say, pardner, just look at this chunk,
  Free-milling — how much to the ton?
Yes, that's a fair sample, a hunk
  That I kept from the ledge — just that one.

You see what I got, and it's there!
  Some day I'll come back with the dust;
Well, so-long, I'll be taking the air,
  It's the ledge, or the buzzards — and bust!

THE BALLAD OF BILLY THE KID

No man in the West ever won such renown
As young Billy Bonney of Santa Fé town,
And of all the wild outlaws that met a bad end,
None so quick with a pistol or true to a friend.

It was in Silver City his first trouble came,
A man called Billy's mother a very foul name;
Billy swore to get even, his chance it came soon,
When he stabbed that young man in Joe Dyer's saloon.

He kissed his poor mother and fled from the scene,
A bold desperado and not yet fifteen;
He hid in a sheep-camp but short was his stay,
For he stole an old pony and rode far away.

At monte and faro he next took a hand,
And lived in Tucson on the fat of the land;
But the game was too easy, the life was too slow,
So he drifted alone into Old Mexico.

It was not very long before Billy came back,
With a notch in his gun and some gold in a sack;
He struck for the Pecos his comrades to see,
And they all rode to Lincoln and went on a spree.

There he met his friend Tunstall and hired as a hand
To fight with the braves of the Jingle-bob brand;
Then Tunstall was murdered and left in his gore;
To avenge that foul murder Young Billy he swore.

First Morton and Baker he swiftly did kill,
Then he slaughtered Bill Roberts at Blazer's sawmill;
Sheriff Brady and Hindman in Lincoln he slew,
Then he rode to John Chisum's along with his crew.

There he stood off a posse and drove them away.
In McSween's house in Lincoln he made his next play;
Surrounded he fought till the house was burned down,
But he dashed through the flames and escaped from the
town.

Young Billy rode north and Young Billy rode south,
He plundered and killed with a smile on his mouth,
But he always came back to Fort Sumner again
For his Mexican sweetheart was living there then.

His trackers were many, they followed him fast,
In Arroyo Tivan he was captured at last;
He was taken to Lincoln and put under guard,
And sentenced to hang in the old court-house yard.

J. Bell and Bob Ollinger watched day and night,
And Bob told Young Billy he'd made his last fight.

Young Billy gave Ollinger scarcely a glance,
But sat very still and awaited his chance.

One day he played cards with J. Bell in the room,
Who had no idea how close was his doom;
Billy slipped off a handcuff, hit Bell on the head.
Then he snatched for the pistol and shot him down dead.

Bob Ollinger heard and he ran to the spot
To see what had happened and who had been shot;
Young Billy looked down from a window and fired,
Bob Ollinger sank to the ground and expired.

Then Young Billy escaped on a horse that was near,
As he rode forth from Lincoln he let out a cheer;
Though his foes they were many he feared not a one,
So long as a cartridge remained in his gun.

But his comrades were dead or had fled from the land,
It was up to Young Billy to play a lone hand;
And Sheriff Pat Garrett he searched far and wide,
Never thinking the Kid in Fort Sumner would hide.

But when Garrett heard Billy was hiding in town,
He went to Pete Maxwell's when the sun had gone down;
The door was wide open, the night it was hot,
So Pat Garrett walked in and sat down by Pete's cot.

The Ballad of Billy the Kid

Young Billy had gone for to cut him some meat,
No hat on his head and no boots on his feet;
When he saw two strange men on the porch in the gloom,
He pulled his gun quick and backed into the room.

Billy said, 'Who is that?' and he spoke Maxwell's name,
Then from Pat Garrett's pistol the answer it came —
The swift, cruel bullet went true to its mark,
And Young Billy fell dead on the floor in the dark.

So Young Billy Bonney he came to his end,
Shot down by Pat Garrett who once was his friend;
Though for coolness and courage both gunmen ranked high,
It was Fate that decided Young Billy should die.

Each year of his life was a notch in his gun,
For in twenty-one years he had slain twenty-one.
His grave is unmarked and by deserts sands hid,
And so ends the true story of Billy the Kid.

SONG OF THE MULE

Sing, if ye will, of the thoroughbred, and the fine old Morgan breed,
The Arab sire with his noble head and his gift of grace and speed,
Of cavalry mount and range cayuse — yea, follow the old-time rule;
But here is the song of a stouter muse — the song of the homely mule!

Unsung pedestrian Pegasus, child of the True Romance,
A worthy theme for the best of us in the study of assonance;
A royal gift when the Spanish Don held half of the world in fee;
Banners fade — yet the mule goes on, in spite of his pedigree.

Sorrel or chestnut, brown or black, fleabitten gray or roan,
Zebra stripe on his legs or back, a lineage all his own;
His hide is tough, his voice is loud, his frame is uncouth and strong;
He shows no pride as a horse is proud — but he knows where his feet belong.

Song of the Mule

He came with the outpost ambulance, he followed the new
frontier,
He was more than a long-eared circumstance as a railroad
pioneer;
He blazed the way for the iron trail and carried the scant
supplies,
Or toiled at grading and tucked his tail and hee-hawed to
the skies.

When scouts ride into the borderland, the mule is first to go,
The chosen mount of a wary band who trail an elusive foe;
Hunger and heat and thirst pursue, cinchas and belts grow
slack, —
Guidon and horse may make it through — but ever the
mule comes back.

Yea, smile at his awkward fashioning, mock at his weird
refrain,
But watch him work in a freighter's string, and watch him
jump the chain
On a mountain grade, with a load of ore, when the brake-
shoes grind and jerk —
And a half-mile drop to the Golden Shore if he doesn't
oberve his work!

In outland venture, in mine or mart, he's the handiest tool
alive,
Show him his work — he takes his part and strives as the
builders strive;

Rusty, dusty, rugged, and slow, he ambles from sun to sun,
Trails a trace to the barn — and lo! the thing that was
dreamed is done.

Hut! you Jerry! Hyeh! Jake! The dump-carts jolt and
groan,
The slithering fresno rounds the stake, the crushers vomit
stone;
Dust, machinery, mules, and men, whistle and tramway
gong,
Over the world and back again — this is your glory-song!

SONG OF MERCADO

Just over the border where strife and disorder
Make living a difficult trade,
The bandit, Mercado, his watchword '*Cuidado!*'
Delighted to pillage and raid.

And each ragged fellow who didn't show yellow
Was given a chance to recruit,
Or lacking ambition soon took the position
Inspired by the simple word 'Shoot!'

With followers twenty and *vino* aplenty,
This sprightly Fulano de Tal
Stole horses and chickens and stirred up the dickens
From Alamos down to Parral;

Then riding like thunder he'd fly with his plunder,
And hide in the heart of the range,
Where weary of sticking and thieving and picking
He'd pick the guitar for a change.

'When young I wore leather and gold,
A hunter of thieves — a *rural*,
And now I am hunted. Behold,
I follow Fulano de Tal!

'My friend is my little carbine,
A trusty companion is she;
My foe is the man in between
His sack of *dinero* and me.

'I raid and I plunder the great,
And much to the lowly I give;
When *pesos* are plenty, why wait?
Por dios! a fellow must live!

'The valley for forage and loot,
The hills for the hunted *ladron;*[1]
High life and hot liquor to boot,
And every man out for his own.

'Yet beware of the *portal azul,*
And too much *Bonita* at home;
A lover is ever a fool,
And love is a kettle of foam.

'I take what I need when I will,
I drink till the bottle is dry;
Though Fate bring good fortune or ill,
Por dios! a fellow must die!

'So beware of the liquor that's free,
Red wine is the advocate's ink;
And beware, my *bandidos,* of me!
Por dios! but hand me a drink!'

Song of Mercado

Thus Manuel Mercado with tuneful bravado,
A Spanish guitar in his hand,
Sang gayly of bullets, gold, liquor, and pullets,
To please his illiterate band;

And when Time took a hitch in his open-air kitchen,
He'd lay his guitar in the shade,
And with brisk dots and dashes he'd curl his moustaches,
And take up the tools of his trade.

CHARLEY LEE

A LOW moon shone on the desert land and the sage was
silver white,
As Lee — a thong round hand and hand — stood straight
in the lantern light.
'You have strung up Red and Burke,' said he,
'And you say that the next will be Charley Lee,
But there's never a rope was made for me.'
And he laughed in the quiet night.

They shaped the noose and they flicked the rope and over
the limb it fell,
And Charley Lee saw the ghost of hope go glimmering
down to hell.
Two shadows swung from the cottonwood tree,
And the wind went whispering, 'Charley Lee,'
For the turning shadows would soon be three,
And never a stone to tell.

'Have ye more to say for yourself?' said Gray, 'a message
the like, or prayer?
If ye have, then hasten and have your say. We trailed and
we trapped ye fair,
With fire and iron at Hidden Sink,
Where none but the stolen horses drink.

And the chain but wanted a final link.
Ye were riding my red roan mare.'

'But prove your property first,' said Lee. 'Would you call
the mare your own,
With never a brand or mark to see, or name to the big red
roan?
But strip the saddle and turn her loose,
And I'll show that the mare is my own cayuse.
And I don't — then take it a fair excuse,
To tighten the rope you've thrown.'

Gaunt, grim faces and steady eyes were touched with
a somber look,
And hands slipped slowly to belted thighs and held on
a finger-crook,
For Gray of Mesa who claimed the mare,
Had talked too much as he led them there,
Nor other among them knew the lair,
So a grip on their haste they took.

'Give him a chance,' said Monty Wade, and, 'What is the
use?' said Blake.
'He's done,' said Harney; 'his string is played. But we'll
give him an even break.'
So they led the mare to the cottonwood tree,
Nor saddle nor bridle nor rope had she.
'Bonnie, come here!' said Charley Lee,
And soft was the word he spake.

The roan mare came and she nosed his side and nuzzled him
friendly-wise;
'Kneel!' cried Lee, and he leaped astride and fled as the
swallow flies.
Flashes followed his flight in vain,
Bullets spattered the ground like rain,
Hoofs drummed far on the midnight plain,
And a low moon rode the skies.

Dawn broke red on the desert land where the turning
shadows fell,
And the wind drove over the rolling sand with a whimper-
ing ebb and swell,
Whimpering, whispering, 'Charley Lee,'
As south on the red roan mare rode he,
Yet the turning shadows they were three,
And never a stone to tell.

HE'LL MAKE A HAND

He joined our outfit on the drive, came driftin' in alone,
A kid, wolf-hungry, half-alive, and mostly skin and bone,
With nothin' but a played-out hoss that he could call his own.

Too young to be a down-and-out, a-ramblin' 'round the land,
His stock in trade some language stout, a smile, and plenty sand.
But Mose, the foreman, took him on and said, 'He'll make a hand.'

We combed our beds for boots and hat and gave what we could spare,
Mose put him on a pony that could take him anywhere.
And when we pushed 'em up the trail, you bet the Kid was there.

He weren't no angel, and we threw some language at the Kid;
But cussed for what he didn't do and cussed for what he did,
He didn't bow his neck and pitch, but kep' his temper hid.

The night was sultry, hot and queer, the clouds were movin' slow,

The Kid night-hawkin' — we could hear his whistlin' soft and low,
When, far away, like whisperin' the wind began to blow.

A shufflin' in the beddin'-ground, and yonder, down the hill,
A streak of white, a rumblin' sound, then everything was still,
When, smellin' thunder in the air, the herd began to mill.

Old Mose was pullin' on his boots, a-settin' on his bed;
'She's loadin' fast and when she shoots —' and that was all he said,
For something busted in the sky, and lit the world with red.

A spatterin' rain, a rush, a roar, and hell had opened wide,
The cattle down the valley floor, a-humpin' hoof and hide,
As right and left we swung and rode like blind-drunk Injuns ride.

The wind fair tore your breath away, the rain beat swift and cold,
The lightnin' flooded white as day, the thunder ripped and rolled,
And every blunderin' jump a chance you wouldn't grow too old.

He'll Make a Hand

The mornin' air come sparklin' bright, the hills seemed close
around,
And what had happened in the night was hoof-marked on
the ground:
Old Mose he called me to a draw and showed me what he
found.

The Kid had done the best he could to head that wild
stampede,
Had done like any real hand would — the sign was plain to
read —
Not ridin' wide to swing the bunch, but cuttin' in the lead.

We dug a grave and covered him with rock and brush and
sand,
And Mose he said a kind of prayer which all could under-
stand:
'Old Master, give the Kid a chance. Down here he made
a hand.'

MORNINGSTAR

Bill Morningstar, I ask you fair,
  Will ever you be done,
With talk of seas and sailormen,
  With gazing at the sun?

With tales of wandering everywhere,
  With shifty folk and fey?
And must you to the road again,
  When I have bid you stay?

. . .

Aye, lass! and well I know,
  Your father's house is grand,
But I ha' seen the morning glow
  On spires o' Samarcand.

'Tis pleasant lass, Oh, aye!
  And kind ye bid me stay,
But yonder calls the summer sky,
  Wi' spars aslant the bay.

Aye, feather beds are fine,
  Great comfort for the wise,
But hedge and meadow-grass be mine,
  Wi' moonlight in my eyes.

Morningstar

Wi' little in my pack
  Of silver coin, or gold,
I ha' the less to bend my back,
  The less to wear me old.

Nay, lass, I'd have ye sing,
  Nor mind an empty chair,
'Tis William gone a-wandering,
  Let busy-noddies stare.

Aye, wandering wi' a song,
  In foreign lands and far,
But lass I'll be remembering long,
  Ye liked Bill Morningstar.

'Tis well, 'tis well I know
  A cotter has it grand,
But I ha' seen the morning glow
  On spires of Samarcand.

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THE PLAINS

HERE the painted warrior sleeps,
And the moon a memory keeps,
  Through the night,
Of the pony-herd and raid,
And the forays fierce he made,
  And the fight.

Nor again the freighter's train
Drifts its dust across the plain
  In the dawn;
He has clattered down the ways
Of his wild and cussful days,
  He is gone.

And along this grassy shore,
Here the cowboy rides no more,
  To and fro;
His herd and he have passed,
They have vanished in the vast
  Long ago.

Yet I know a new frontier,
Where the warriors red appear,
  As of old;
Where the battle, hunt, and dance

Breathe again their old romance,
Bravely told.

Where the freighter pops his whip,
As the straining cattle slip,
Tug, and wince;
Where he draws his meager pay,
Where he spends it all in play,
Like a prince.

Where the prairie grass is green,
And the cowboy, lithe and lean,
Lopes along,
To a girl he's going to meet,
As his pony's nimble feet
Drum a song.

Days of spur and rope and gun,
Days of deviltry and fun,
War, and jest,
Days of peace and days of strife,
And the bold and lusty life
Of the West.

But mere words, of what avail,
When your feet are on the trail
In the sage;
When this little song you've read,
Mount your horse and go ahead,
Turn a page.

BILL McGEE

Oh, Bill McGee he was long and lean with a couple of miles of thirst,
His talk was tough and his eye was mean — that is, when you met him first;
But that was only a way he had of making a stranger stare,
For Bill was anything else but bad, and square as a die is square.

'When Bill falls down he is halfway home,' so the punchers used to say;
'And the eagles they roost in his shinin' dome when they happen to fly his way.'
But Bill was too high for their jibes and jest, as serene as a summer star,
For he held the job that he liked the best, he was boss of the Blue Dog bar.

Once, in his early and wild career while riding a salty string,
He laid his twine on a longhorn steer and bobbled the whole dum thing.
Something happened, and when the dust had settled, the boys drew nigh,
And found that Bill had been sadly mussed, but he still retained one eye.

Bill McGee

They hung his chaps on a harness peg and they hung his rope there, too,
Took him to town and shook a leg to see what the doc could do;
They sent for a new glass eye by mail — Oh, ours was a careless town!
The eye we ordered was blue and pale — Bill's original eye was brown.

Folks they traveled from near and far and all were athirst to see
The new addition to Johnson's bar — this double-eyed Bill McGee,
And never a stranger entered there but was struck with a sudden chill,
For the brown eye pivoted everywhere while the blue glass eye stood still.

He would talk to Johnny and look at Jake while he sold a drink to Jim,
And the three would buy for the simple sake of a good long look at him;
I've heard it said that Slewfoot Joe once encountered that awful stare,
And it sobered him up for a week or so, but that's neither here nor there.

Now Wild Jim Wicket lived down our way: while aspiring to win a wreath,

He mixed with a raging bronc one day and parted with all
his teeth;
He was fetched to town and patched like new by Goose-
berry Simes, the vet,
But the trouble was that he couldn't chew till he sent for
another set.

Wild Jim walked up to the bar one night, rigged out in his
brand new smile.
His teeth were shiny and tombstone white, you could
see 'em for half a mile.
'Drinks for the crowd!' says he to Bill, and they went
where all drinks go,
Then he raised his hand and the room was still. 'But,
pardner, I got no dough.'

Grinning, he pulled his false teeth loose and slid 'em across
the bar,
'Are these grinders good for the old corn juice?' Says Bill,
'Well, I guess they are.'
Bill was game though we thought we'd die, his face was
that long and strange
As he screwed from its socket his new glass eye, and said,
'Mister, and here's your change.'

BENNY BENITO

Who found him encountered a rugged decline,
To a far, sunny valley, and fronting his field,
Corral and adobe, neat garden and vine,
Beans, chili, and melons — a bountiful yield.

His door ever open to any who came,
And his welcome, though mixed, was politely complete:
'*Buenos dias!* You hongry? Benito my name;
She is *mucho calor;* I fix you the eat.'

Your saddle and bridle hung up in the shack,
And Benny observing with humorous shrug
Your horse as he rolls, '*Si*, he scratch heem the back!'
Then a seat in the arbor — a tall wicker jug.

'The *vino*, I make heem. You like the good drink?
Buena suerte! I wait till those dinner I bring,
Those *frijoles*, those *queso*, *tortillas* — I think,
Yes, I fix the new fire and those coffee she sing.'

When dusk, velvet-padded, swift, stealthily slips,
Down into the valley, and silences fill
With the fragrance of pines, and the candle flame dips,
To a wandering breeze drifting over the hill,

In a friendly discussion of ways and of means,
Benito grows eloquent, proud of his own
Independence, his burros, his melons and beans;
'*Si!* I make heem go good, and I make heem alone.

'When the sun she is shine on two side of the fence,
Those *gallinas* — those chicken — she lay the good egg;
When she old, she is cook: what you say, the expense,
Is *nada.* Oh, sometime she tough in the leg.

'Those alfalfa she grow, and those *higos* — you say,
The fig — *Si!* I pick heem and dry heem and keep;
And those chili and onion I put heem away,
When the winter she come and the groun' she is sleep.

'Sometime with those burro I make to the gold,
Leetle *pasear* — *lejos* — where no *hombre* see;
She is hide in the desert. I look. She is old,
Long time she is hide but I find the gold, me!

'*Ai! Mucho dinero* for mans she is bad,
He no work, he go sick, and his hongry she go;
Me, I strong like the horse. And those big *soledad,*
She is speak what you say, "'Take heem easy — go slow!"

'So *mañana* I make heem, sometime, yes, I think —
"*Pobrecito!* That old mountain-lion!" you say;
But this place she is mine, and the eat and the drink;
And this place she is yours all the time what you stay.'

BOOMER JOHNSON

Now Mr. Boomer Johnson was a gettin' old in spots,
But you don't expect a bad-man to go wrastlin' pans and pots;
But he'd done his share of killin' and his draw was gettin' slow,
So he quits a-punchin' cattle and he takes to punchin' dough.

Our foreman up and hires him, figurin' age had rode him tame,
But a snake don't get no sweeter just by changin' of its name.
Well, Old Boomer knowed his business — he could cook to make you smile,
But say, he wrangled fodder in a most peculiar style.

He never used no matches — left 'em layin' on the shelf;
Just some kerosene and cussin' and the kindlin' lit itself.
And, pardner, I'm allowin' it would give a man a jolt,
To see him stir *frijoles* with the barrel of his Colt.

Now killin' folks and cookin' ain't so awful far apart;
That must 'a' been why Boomer kept a-practicin' his art;
With the front sight of his pistol he would cut a pie-lid slick,
And he'd crimp her with the muzzle for to make the edges stick.

He built his doughnuts solid, and it sure would curl your
hair,
To see him plug a doughnut as he tossed it in the air.
He bored the holes plumb center every time his pistol spoke,
Till the can was full of doughnuts and the shack was full of
smoke.

We-all was gettin' jumpy — but he couldn't understand
Why his shootin' made us nervous when his cookin' was so
grand.
He kept right on performin', and it weren't no big surprise,
When he took to markin' tombstones on the covers of his
pies.

They didn't taste no better and they didn't taste no worse,
But a-settin' at that table was like ridin' in a hearse;
You didn't do no talkin' and you took just what you got,
So we et till we was foundered just to keep from gettin'
shot.

Us at breakfast one bright mornin', I was feelin' kind of
low,
When Old Boomer passed the doughnuts and I tells him
plenty, 'No!
All I takes this trip is coffee, for my stomach is a wreck,'
I could see the itch for killin' swell the wattles on his neck.

Scorn his grub? He strings some doughnuts on the muzzle
of his gun,

And he shoves her in my gizzard and he says, 'You're
takin' one!'
He was set to start a graveyard, but for once he was mis-
took;
Me not wantin' any doughnuts, I just up and salts the
cook.

Did they fire him? Listen, pardner, there was nothin' left
to fire.
Just a row of smilin' faces and another cook to hire.
If he joined some other outfit and is cookin' — what I
mean,
It's where they ain't no matches and they don't need
kerosene.

WALKIN' JOHN

WALKIN' JOHN was a big rope-hoss, from over Morongo way;
When you laid your twine on a ragin' steer, old John was there to stay.
So long as your rope was stout enough and your terrapin shell stayed on,
Dally-welte, or hard-and-fast, it was all the same to John.

When a slick-eared calf would curl his tail, decidin' he couldn't wait,
Old John, forgettin' the scenery, would hit an amazin' gait;
He'd bust through them murderin' cholla spikes, not losin' an inch of stride,
And mebbe you wished you was home in bed — but, pardner, he made you ride!

Yes, John was willin' and stout and strong, sure-footed and Spanish broke,
But I'm tellin' the wonderin' world for once, he sure did enjoy his joke;
Whenever the mornin' sun came up he would bog his head clear down,
Till your chaps was flappin' like angel wings and your hat was a floatin' crown.

That was your breakfast, regular, and mebbe you fell or stuck.
At throwin' a whing-ding, John was there a-teachin' the world to buck.
But after he got it off his chest and the world come back in sight,
He'd steady down like an eight-day clock when its innards is oiled and right.

We give him the name of Walkin' John, once durin' the round-up time,
Way back in the days when beef was beef and John he was in his prime;
Bob was limpin' and Frank was sore and Homer he wouldn't talk,
When somebody says, 'He's Walkin' John — he's makin' so many walk.'

But shucks! He was sold to a livery that was willin' to take the chance
Of John becomin' a gentleman — not scared of them English pants.
And mebbe the sight of them toy balloons that is wore on the tourists' legs
Got John a-guessin'; from that time on he went like he walked on eggs.

As smooth as soap — till a tourist guy, bogged down in a pair of chaps,

The rest of his ignorance plumb disguised in the rest of his rig — perhaps,
Come flounderin' up to the livery and asked for to see the boss:
But Norman he savvied his number right and give him a gentle hoss.

Yes, Walkin' John, who had never pitched for a year, come first of June.
But I'm tellin' the knock-kneed universe he sure recollected soon!
Somebody whanged the breakfast gong, though we'd all done had our meat,
And John he started to bust in two, with his fiddle between his feet.

That dude spread out like a sailin' bat, went floppin' acrost the sky;
He weren't dressed up for to aviate, but, sister, he sure could fly!
We picked him out of a cholla bush, and some of his clothes staid on;
We felt of his spokes, and wired his folks. It was all the same to John.

JOE BIDDLE

Old Joe Biddle, a mining man, when his earthly days were past,
Found himself at the Pearly Gate that leads to the Golden Shore,
Along with his burro and pick and pan. He had struck it rich at last!
Keen to begin, if they'd let him in, a-grubbing for gold once more.

There was the Gate and Joe outside, and Peter who kept the keys,
And Joe must account for his days on earth. Then, finding his record clear,
Saint Peter said, 'Your case is tried, but your kind are as thick as fleas,
They're camped around on the choicest ground till there isn't a highway clear.

'They're sluicing here and they're drilling there, and panning the Golden Sand;
They've sunk a shaft on Angel Street and established a noisy stamp,
They chip out chunks from the Golden Stair and pass 'em from hand to hand,
And the Golden Stream is a vanished dream. The place is a mining camp.'

'If you'll let me in,' Joe Biddle said, 'I think I can change
their tune;
Just give me a week to drift around, and tell 'em a yarn
or two,
And I'll clean 'em out, yes, every head, to the lone, last
flop-eared loon
And it's understood if I don't make good, I leave. Now
it's up to you.'

They let Joe in and he poked about, just visiting day by
day,
Scorned the samples the miners showed and all that they
had to tell,
Then cautioning each not to let it out, he said in a stealthy
way,
As how he had heard — and he gave his word — of
a wonderful strike in Hell.

The secret leaked as secrets will, in whisper and hint;
and then,
The hard-rock boys and the placer men slipped out of
the Golden Gate,
And peace returned and the streets were still, for gone were
the mining men.
Out they passed to the least and last. Joe Biddle was
quite elate.

All the gold in the firmament and none to dispute his claim!
Joe was so rich it hurt his eyes to look at the ore in sight;

He prowled around, at first content, but he missed the
mining game;
It wasn't luck when a vein was struck. Somehow it
wasn't right.

One day he packed and he took a hike to the place where
Peter sat,
'I'm wanting,' he said, 'to join the crowd that stampeded
to prospect Hell.'
'But you know,' said Peter, 'there was no strike — just
a bluff though a peach at that!'
'Well, mebby so, but I aim to go,' said Joe. 'You can
never tell!'

BILL TANDY

Bill Tandy, ridin' Hell's Delight, come foggin' into town one night,
With three months' wages in his jeans, a clean shirt in his slicker.
'Three months of cows and alkali,' says he, 'would make a angel dry!
I got no wings, but watch me fly!' And then he took some liquor.

Now Bill warn't bad, but plenty wild when red-eye got his feelin's riled,
And then he gets some careless with his language and his gun;
He mounts that little roan cayuse and whoops and turns the fireworks loose,
A-spurrin' up and down the street and shootin' on the run.

Three times he comes a streakin' red and everybody duckin' lead,
With window lights a-poppin' out and glass a-rattlin' down.
We kind of liked to see him play and so we let him have his way,
For, Stranger, I admire to say he livened up the town.

Bill Tandy

He ventilated signs and doors and like to ruined dance-hall floors,
A-shootin' heels off slippers and a-scarin' of the girls;
Him figurin' they was hard to please he dusted the piano keys
A-tryin' to play 'My Rosary' — but he busted all the pearls.

Ther come a time he got so tough we figured he had played enough,
And so the sheriff warned him, kind of easy-like and slow:
'You're gettin' too expensive, Bill. Just curl your tail and climb the hill.'
But Bill he says, 'Like hell I will! I'm set. Just watch me go!'

The sheriff aimed to run the town, so he just knocked Bill Tandy down,
And easin' him of belt and gun he throwed him into jail;
But Bill come to at twelve that night, broke jail, and mounted Hell's Delight,
And thinkin' he warn't treated right he hit the sheriff's trail.

Us settin' in a poker game, the sheriff says, 'This here is tame,
'I'll raise you' — when Bill Tandy spurred his pony through the door;

Well, we-all didn't see no joke in settin' still and eatin' smoke,
So four of us we up and spoke, and Bill he hit the floor.

Which done, we-all set down again. The sheriff says, 'I'll raise you ten.'
Buck Yardlaw calls, the sheriff shows and gathers in the pot.
The crowd come back. We passed the hat; bought Bill a suit — he needed that,
And planted him on Alder Flat — a mighty pretty spot.

THE BOSKY STEER

JAKE and Roany was a-chousin' along,
And Jake was a-singin' what he called a song,
When up from a waller what should appear,
But a moss-horned maverick, a bosky steer.

Jake he started with his hat pulled down,
Built a blocker that would snare a town;
That steer he headed for the settin' sun,
And believe me, neighbor, he could hump and run!

Roany he follered his pardner's deal,
— Two ole waddies what could head and heel —
Both of 'em ridin' for the Chicken Coop,
With a red-hot iron and a hungry loop.

The sun was a-shinin' in ole Jake's eyes,
And he wasn't just lookin' for no real surprise,
When the steer gave a wiggle like his dress was tight,
Busted through a juniper and dropped from sight.

Jake and his pony did the figure eight,
But Jake did his addin' just a mite too late;
He left the saddle, and a-seein' red,
He lit in the gravel of a river bed.

Now Roany's hoss was a good hoss, too,
But he didn't understand just why Jake flew,
So he humped and started for the cavvyiard,
And left Roany settin' where the ground was hard.

Jake was lookin' at a swelled-up thumb,
And he says, 'I reckon we was goin' some!'
When Roany hollers, 'Git a-movin' quick,
Or you're sure goin' to tangle with that maverick!'

Roany clumb a-straddle of the juniper tree.
'Ain't no more room up here,' yells he.
So Jake he figured for hisself to save,
By backin' in the openin' of a cut-bank cave.

The steer he prodded with his head one side,
But he couldn't quite make it to ole Jake's hide;
Kep' snortin' and pawin' and proddin' stout,
But every time he quit, why, Jake come out.

'You ole fool!' yips Roany, 'Keep back out of sight!
You act like you're *hankerin'* to make him fight!'
Then Jake he hollers kinda fierce and queer:
'Back, hell, nothin'! There's a bear in here!'

MOURNFUL JOE

ONE mornin' early when the ground was froze,
Old Mournful Joe from his tarp arose,
He et his chuck, give his plate a toss,
And picked up his lariat to ketch a hoss:

Says he, 'I know that I'll sure git throwed.'
Him thinkin' that way, why, the bronc he knowed,
For he humped his back, give a warnin' squeal,
And left Joe tangled in a wagon-wheel.

It's Hi Yi Yippy and a Too La Lay,
You'll sure git scattered if you feel that way!

Once Joe was sittin' in the line-shack door,
When a cyclone started for to rip and roar,
And instead of crawlin' to a deep coulee,
That darned old waddie clumb a piñon tree:

Says he, 'I know what I'm goin' to git,'
And he hung to the branches as the cyclone hit,'
It tore his whiskers and it sprained his back,
But it never touched a button on the old line-shack.

It's a Hi Yi Yippy and a Too La Lay,
You'll sure git scattered if you feel that way!

Joe got to foolin' with a pick and drill,
Muckin' and minin' on Red Rock Hill;
The sun was shinin' and the air was hot,
And he was a-sweatin' when he tamped the shot:

Says he, 'I'm bettin' of my Sunday shoes,
That somethin'll happen when I light this fuse:'
And I reckon the birds weren't much surprised,
When he come up flyin' like he advertised.

It's Hi Yi Yippy and a Too La Lay,
You'll sure git scattered if you feel that way!

He was always mournin', but a-doin' fine,
And he kept on livin' up to ninety-nine,
He'd done quit minin' and a-chasin' steers,
So we figured he'd make it to a hundred years.

Says he, 'I'm bettin' on no such thing,
Somethin'll happen and the bell will ring:'
Come half-past-eleven he begins to snore,
And at twelve he was sleepin' on the Golden Shore.

It's Hi Yi Yippy, and a Too La Lay,
You'll sure git scattered if you feel that way!

TONGA BILL

EVENINGSTAR was the schooner's name,
Piled up on the Tonga reef, sir:
Out of the wreck but a lone spar came,
For the sea is a terrible thief, sir:
Yes, every man of the crew was drowned,
All but myself here, hard-a-ground,
For twenty year, and I'm hale and sound,
And never a care or grief, sir.

The breakers had used me wondrous rough,
So I lay forlorned on the beach, sir:
When out of the jungle, sure enough,
Comes trippin' a dusky peach, sir;
She fetched cool water, she bound my head,
She helped me staggerin' up and led
My fumblin' feet to a *nipa* shed,
A-cooin' her kind of speech, sir.

It was not so long, when she fetched her Pa,
A grand old mahogany lad, sir:
Her eyes were bright and her smile, I saw,
Would never make any one mad, sir:
Says she in her lingo: 'This man is mine.'
He grins and nods me a friendly sign;

Thinks I, I'm willin' to fall in line,
In fact I was famishin' glad, sir.

We built a hut and she fixed it neat,
Back there in the forest dim, sir:
She was pretty and young and sweet,
And I but a rovin' limb, sir:
But she named the day for our weddin' feast,
And her folks, some seventy-two at least,
Come singin' along with the village priest,
So the knot was tied and trim, sir.

Twenty year of this island life,
I'm a wonderful fortunate man, sir:
Sons and daughters, a lovin' wife,
And I am chief of the clan, sir:
From the mornin' sun on the blue lagoon,
Till the palms are black on the silver moon
And the sea a-singin' a lazy tune,
There's never a hitch in the plan, sir.

Friends? What friends did I have before?
None of 'em lived to grow old, sir:
But these that gather around my door
Know nothing of strife or gold, sir:
'Tonga Bill is our chief,' they say:
'His eye keeps devils and such away:'
Well, here I'm anchored and here I stay,
And that's all there is to be told, sir.

IF A HORSE COULD TALK

I WONDER, now, what my pony thinks,
When I slip his bit and he snuffs and drinks,
Then noses around the home corral,
And stands in the corner to rest a spell?

I wonder, now, if he sees the sense
Of huntin' strays or of mendin' fence?
Or runnin' stock, or a-ropin' steers,
Or slittin' a slick-eared yearlin's ears?

Sometimes, when he stands with half-shut eyes,
Lookin' so solemn and old and wise,
Just like he savvied the turns and tricks
Of cows and wimmen and politics,

I get to thinkin' it's just as well,
Considerin' all that a hoss could tell,
For me, and many a good cow-hand,
That a hoss ain't called to the witness-stand.

But speakin' of hangin' and flowers and such,
Some horses and humans can know too much,
And get to swellin' and shed their pack,
A-scatterin' trouble to hell and back.

One time way up by the meadow sink,
When I was givin' my hoss a drink,
A city girl on a thoroughbred
Come ridin' up to the pool and said:

'Why Jim! You here? What a big surprise!'
And she looks at me with them teasin' eyes,
And our horses nickerin' now and then,
Just like they was sayin': 'You here again!'

Me leanin' close to her laughin' lips,
When my hoss steps wide and the saddle slips;
Then he bogs his head and he done his best,
And I knew when I lit I was sure Out West.

A-seein' me up in the air like that,
Her hoss stampeded across the flat,
And my pony follows, a-runnin' stout,
And then — a couple of stars come out.

Thinks I, as I started to pull my freight,
'It's six cold miles to the ranchhouse gate,
And a pretty night — for a good, long walk;
How the boys would josh, if a hoss could talk!'

THE BIGELOW BOYS

Billy and Ed and Joe were raised when the West was new,
Sons of the ranchman Bigelow and sons of their mother, too.
Billy, the eldest, turned to the call of the rope and brand,
And Ed, the next one, also yearned to be known as a first-rate hand.
But the youngest, Joe, was shy when his time to labor came,
So he let his brothers rope and tie and he took to the six-gun game.

First in a border town his youthful nerve was tried;
When the smoke cleared up his foe was down,
And the verdict was suicide.
Next in a gambling hall he discovered an extra ace,
And fired, point-blank as he made his call,
And settled the dealer's case.
So his reputation grew, though he never picked a fight,
And he became, in a year or two, the marshal of Malachite.

The brothers Bigelow, in charge of a bunch of steers,
Rode down that way, and they thought of Joe whom they hadn't seen for years.
They met in The Stope saloon and their boyhood days re-told,

To the sound of a hurdy-gurdy tune and the clink of uneasy gold.
They looked on the drink when red, and Ed and Bill got wild;
'Let's lick the marshal,' the brothers said, 'our mother's darling child.'
Together they made their play. 'Twas a fierce and a lovely fight,
Till the marshal laid them both away with his notable left and right.

Bill awoke with a shuttered eye and Ed with a twisted jaw;
'Liquor!' said Bill with a mournful sigh,
'Yes, liquor,' said Ed, 'and law!'
And they stayed in the calaboose till the next day's sun went down,
When the marshal came and turned them loose and escorted them out of town.
They owned that he'd used them white,
Though their features were largely blue;
That he licked them both in a stand-up fight and drunk as much liquor, too.
Their farewell was sincere, but brief, as their callings were not akin,
Edward and William dealt in beef, while the marshal discouraged sin.

Slowly they rode away, neither sadder nor wiser men.

'Our mother's pet!' Bill heard Ed say, 'but he was a baby, then.'
Said Bill, 'Yes, he's growed a lot; he's regular Western size.
Did you notice the handy way he's got of untyin' these family ties?'
'I recollect,' said Ed, 'when Joey began to creep.'
'And mebby you recollect,' Bill said, 'that he rocked us both to sleep.'
'But what the hell!' said Ed. 'He stood for the whole darn' show,
Liquor, a fight, and board and bed. He sure is a Bigelow!'

THAT WAS MAW

Her name was Martha Bailey, she was smilin', plump, and strong,
Old Jim Bailey was her husband, not so wide but plenty long;
They run a bunch of cattle rangin' south of Mormon Lake,
Maw Bailey did the cookin' —— Oh, them apple pies and cake!

Maw would scold us, smart and sudden, us a-playin' of some trick,
But she'd nurse us like a angel if a waddie tooken sick;
She was doctor, cook, and foreman; on the ranch her word was law,
Old Jim Bailey called her Mrs., but us punchers called her Maw.

Once the Injuns took the warpath, stealin' stock and killin' whites;
Maw was fussin' in the kitchen, puttin' cookin' things to rights;
We was out with Jim, a-workin', never dreamin' of a raid,
When some snaky-eyed Apaches tried to put Maw in the shade.

'How!' says one, pertendin' peaceful, but Maw Bailey knew his game,

That Was Maw

He was packin' of a rifle and his face weren't painted tame.
'How?' says Maw — and then she showed him, swingin'
high and seein' red,
As she let the skillet flicker and she knocked that Injun
dead.

Then she grabbed Jim Bailey's shotgun what was standin'
by the door,
And she sent another Injun where he'd never been before;
When she loosed the second barrel them there Injuns quit
the show,
And we found her cryin' gentle, rollin' out some biscuit
dough.

That was Maw. She'd scold like thunder, but she kept on
makin' pies,
And to see a sick man suffer fetched the tears up in her eyes.
But you couldn't fool her nohow; if some hand that Jim
had hired
Didn't pass her first inspection he got fed — but he got
fired.

Once, when Jim was feelin' poorly and the round-up was at
hand,
Maw put on her boots and Stetson, hired a cook, and took
command,
Every outfit in the valley set up straight and rode polite,
With the hobbles on their cussin' when Maw Bailey come
in sight.

When young Brady was carousin', drunk in Snowflake
night and day,
Maw just saddled up her pony and she drifted down that
way.
No, she didn't try to shame him, though her blood was on
the boil,
She just drug him to the rancho and she fed him castor oil.

Maw took sick one ragin' winter, and it knocked us from
our perch;
Sunday mornin', on the quiet, five of us rode down to
church.
Jim Bailey went and told her, and she says to him, 'Do
tell!
If a shock will cure bronchitis — mercy sakes! I'm gettin'
well.'

Maw was one of them there wimmen, and I reckon they're
the best,
That was solid, wise, and handy in the winnin' of the West;
'Feed your men and critters plenty, mend your fences,
mind the law,
Keep your face and conscience shinin', and you'll make
it!' That was Maw.

WITHDRAWN

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